

**SUMMARY OF THE
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
NOVEMBER 6, 2002**

The On-site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met on Wednesday, November 6, 2002, at 1 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). Chairperson Mr. Alfredo Sotomayor of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources led the meeting. A list of action items generated during this meeting is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B and the meeting agenda is given in Attachment C. *The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed glossary definitions for presentation at the eighth NELAC Interim Meeting (NELAC 8i), and the Chapter 5 checklist.*

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Sotomayor called the meeting to order with a review of the agenda. Mr. Sotomayor then proceeded to announcements. He passed along information about Ms. Jeanne Hankins retirement effective at the end of the year. Mr. Sotomayor continued to encourage committee members that have not yet done so, to join the Institute for National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation (INELA) by NELAC 8i to effect a smooth transition from NELAC to INELA. There being no other announcements, Mr. Sotomayor led a review of the minutes from the committee's October 23, 2002, teleconference. The minutes were approved as written.

STATUS OF ACTION ITEMS

Mr. Sotomayor reviewed the status of the committee's action items from the October 23 teleconference, as follows:

- Mr. Sotomayor continues to work on the summary presentation of the pilot assessors' electronic forum for NELAC 8i.
- Mr. Sotomayor plans to approach INELA at 8i regarding opportunities for partnership or sponsorship of future assessors' forums.
- Dr. Frederic Siegelman and Mr. Jack Hall have completed compilation of definitions for "observation," "finding," and "deficiency" in a presentation for NELAC 8i.
- Dr. Siegleman and Mr. Daniel Hickman provided their respective definitions for critical finding to the committee for review and discussion.
- Dr. Faust Parker volunteered to act as committee scribe for this teleconference.
- Ms. Barbara Giesler informed Mr. Sotomayor that the conference would provide a computer projector, but not laptop computers.
- Mr. Sotomayor will express the concerns of the On-site Assessment Committee in regard to concurrent scheduling of committee sessions at future conferences to Ms. Hankins at NELAC 8i.

GLOSSARY DEFINITIONS

Dr. Siegelman reviewed the presentation that he and Mr. Hall put together for NELAC 8i. The presentation includes the current definitions, reasons for changing them, and a listing of proposed definitions, including several from other sources. The proposed definition of deficiency asks assessors to make decisions on whether there are effects on data quality. However, the current definition of finding also requires assessors to identify conditions that have significant effects on items or activities. The viewpoint of many is that if an item is in the Standard, then not following the item becomes a deficiency.

Mr. Charles Dyer offered that he looks at every single item on the Chapter 5 Checklist and if an item is not performed, he considers this a deficiency. Chapter Four of the Standard requires that all findings be reported. The current definitions do not accomplish what people think they do.

The Committee decided to present the current and proposed definitions at 8i and solicit discussion. The Committee needs feedback to revise the definitions so that they fit the basic needs of all assessors.

The Committee made the following observations:

- Each state has a different way of dealing with deficiencies and to some degree this will continue.
- During assessments, system-wide problems need to be differentiated from isolated instances.
- Assessment reports vary in content and style based on interpretation of definitions.
- Not all deficiencies are alike or have the same weight, but it is not easy to establish rules to distinguish them. The rigor and scope of the corrective action associated with a deficiency can be correlated to its severity. Alternatively, the severity can be acknowledged up front, by categorizing deficiencies into tiers.
- Retaining items in the standard that require excessive judgment will result in significant problems.

Mr. Hickman and Mr. Dyer felt that a solution might be to define deficiency very strictly but to allow flexibility in how concomitant corrective action is handled.

Mr. Sotomayor asked the Committee for examples of items that would constitute “observations.” After some discussion it was concluded that we might not be able to overcome all discrepancies about what could be an observation because differences in state laws affect interpretation.

QUALITY SYSTEM CHECKLIST

Mr. Dyer presented two versions of the checklist (one in ~~strikeout~~ mode and one underlined /clean). There were few comments since the committee had not had time to review the checklist versions. The Committee will resume discussion of the checklist after NELAC 8i. In the

meantime, Mr. Dyer will present the versions of the checklist to the Accrediting Authority (AA) Workgroup.

LOGISTICS FOR NELAC 8I

Everyone was reminded that the On-site Session was on Tuesday (19th) afternoon. The Committee decided to meet for lunch that day prior to the Committee session.

CONCLUSION

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned shortly before 2:30 p.m. EST. The committee's next meeting will be on Wednesday, December 4, 2002, at 1 p.m. EST via teleconference.

**ACTION ITEMS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
NOVEMBER 6, 2002**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	The Committee will meet for lunch before its scheduled session at NELAC 8i.	November 19, 2002
2.	Mr. Sotomayor will complete presentation on the assessors' electronic forum for NELAC 8i.	November 19, 2002
3.	The Committee will hold a session at NELAC 8i.	November 19, 2002
4.	Mr. Dyer will forward the Chapter 5 Checklist to the Accrediting Authority Workgroup.	November 13, 2002
5.	The Committee will resume discussion of Chapter 5 Checklist.	December 4, 2002

**PARTICIPANTS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
NOVEMBER 6, 2002**

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**AGENDA
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
NOVEMBER 6, 2002; 1:00-2:30 p.m. EST**

1:00 – 1:05	Attendance
1:05 – 1:10	Agenda Repair Announcements Status of Action Items Approval of Past Minutes
1:10 – 2:00	Glossary Definitions --Discussion of Presentation for NELAC 8i
2:00 – 2:25	Chapter 5 Checklist
2:25 – 2:30	Next Steps/Adjournment